

January is Birth Defect Month and here are a few things I would like to share with you. Please take the time to check them out. Our 2013 theme focuses on the impact and frequency of birth defects with the theme, "Birth defects are common, costly, and critical." The complete 2013 packet is available [here](#).

Birth defects affect one in every 33 babies born in the United States and are a leading cause of infant mortality. Babies who survive and live with birth defects are at increased risk for developing many lifelong physical, cognitive, and social challenges. Medical care and support services only scrape the surface of the financial and emotional impact of living with birth defects.

The good news is awareness efforts offer hope for reducing the number of birth defects in the future. The following prevention strategies can be promoted. Please encourage all pregnant women and those who may become pregnant to:

- Consume 400 micrograms of folic acid daily
- Manage chronic maternal illnesses such as diabetes, seizure disorders, or phenylketonuria (PKU)
- Reach and maintain a healthy weight
- Talk to a health care provider about taking any medications, both prescription and over-the-counter
- Avoid alcohol, smoking, and illicit drugs
- See a health care provider regularly
- Avoid toxic substances at work or at home
- Ensure protection against domestic violence
- Know their family history and seek reproductive genetic counseling, if appropriate

Some of our messages for 2013 are:

Every 4 ½ minutes, a baby is born with a birth defect. We want to help you reduce that risk.

January is Birth Defects Prevention Month ... but any month is the month to prevent birth defects.

Learn more about prevention, detection, treatment and living with birth defects at www.cdc.gov/birthdefects and www.nbdpn.org.

One in every 33 babies is born with a birth defect.

Birth defects affect us all. What effect will you have on birth defects?

Prevent birth defects ... Now is the time.

The yearly hospital costs for birth defects exceed 2.6 billion dollars.

One in every five infant deaths occurs due to birth defects.

Learn more about birth defects:

www.cdc.gov/birthdefects and www.nbdpn.org

www.nbdpn.org/pwg/psa_downloads.php (Public Service Announcements)

www.nbdpn.org/national_birth_defects_prevent.php (National Birth Defects Prevention Network)

www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/multimedia.html (Multimedia and Tools)

www.endbirthdefects.org/parent_advisory_group.php?navtitle=idxpubs (Excellent site with parent's and children's stories)

www.nbdpn.org/pwg/resources_for_families.php (Resources for families)